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Protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind

Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa

Convention on Biological Diversity

Implementation of United Nations environmental conventions

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly the reports submitted by the secretariats of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

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Implementation of United Nations environmental conventions

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I. Report of the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change on the work of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention

A. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, by resolution 59/234 of 22 December 2004, invited the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change[1] to report to it at its sixtieth session on the work of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention. The present report is submitted in response to that invitation.

B. Outcome of the tenth session of the Conference of the Parties

1. Summary

2. The Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (hereinafter referred to as the Conference) held its tenth session at Buenos Aires from 6 to 17 December 2004. The Conference gained political momentum from the imminent entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol,[2] which occurred on 16 February 2005. International cooperation for protection of the global climate has thus entered a new phase because, for the first time, industrialized countries who have ratified the Protocol have assumed quantified commitments to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. The Conference adopted the Buenos Aires programme of work on adaptation and response measures. It further mainstreams adaptation into the climate negotiations. The Conference also completed unfinished business from the Marrakech Accords, relating to land use, land-use change and forestry issues.

3. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change has reached near-universality with 189 parties, and the Kyoto Protocol has been ratified by 152 States (as at 22 July 2005).

2. Outcome of the tenth session

4. The formal decisions adopted by the Conference, some of which are noted below, will support measures to mitigate and to facilitate adaptation to climate change.

5. The Buenos Aires programme of work on adaptation and response measures provides for further scientific assessments of vulnerabilities and options for adaptation; further support to national adaptation programmes of action of least developed countries; workshops and technical papers on various aspects of climate change risk and adaptation; and support for mainstreaming adaptation into sustainable development planning. It focuses on several aspects of adaptation: the need for data from climate models; methodologies for vulnerability and assessment; and support for adaptation action resulting from national strategies and plans. The measures listed include urging industrialized countries to provide financial resources, improving information exchange and data availability, and advancing vulnerability studies and adaptation projects, as well as regular reporting by the Global Environment Facility on adaptation activities. In addition, three regional

workshops on adaptation and one expert meeting for small island developing States will be conducted before November 2007. Activities under a section of the plan on the impact of the implementation of response measures include conducting two expert meetings and reporting requirements. The Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice was requested to develop a structured five-year programme of work on the scientific, technical and socio-economic aspects of impacts, vulnerability and adaptation to climate change. The Buenos Aires programme of work calls for an overall assessment at the fourteenth session of the Conference of the Parties, in 2008, of adaptation activities conducted within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change process.

6. The financial mechanism to provide funding for the above-mentioned activities includes the Global Environment Facility Trust Fund, the Least Developed Countries Fund, the Special Climate Change Fund, and the forthcoming Adaptation Fund. Drafting of a decision to finance activities other than the preparation of national adaptation programmes of action through the Least Developed Countries Fund was not completed and a decision on guidance to the Special Climate Change Fund was deferred. Since the tenth session of the Conference, the Subsidiary Body for Implementation agreed on a draft decision on the Least Developed Countries Fund for adoption by the Conference at its eleventh session.

7. The Conference showed strong support for the clean development mechanism, a unique instrument that supports sustainable development projects in developing countries through private investment and technology transfer and helps industrialized countries, through the credits generated, to meet their emission reduction targets in a cost-effective manner. The clean development mechanism credits can eventually enter the emissions trading market, which started in the European Union on 1 January 2005. At the Conference, operational issues and efforts for expanding the scope and geographical spread of projects were discussed. The Conference opened the way for new types of clean development mechanism projects relating to small-scale forestry, thus adding to existing possibilities such as projects that produce power from renewable energy sources or from methane captured at landfills.

8. The implementation of the Convention continues with 123 out of 148 developing countries having submitted their initial national communication. A landmark was the presentation of the initial national communications of Brazil and China, which provide detailed accounts of the magnitudes and the sources of their greenhouse gas emissions, as well as of policies and measures taken by both countries. The submission of these documents is a signal of the continuing commitment of these countries to the climate regime.

9. Parties have reaffirmed their commitment to implementing the frameworks for capacity-building in developing countries and in countries with economies in transition, in order to facilitate the implementation of their commitments under the Convention.

10. The Conference decided to seek recommendations from the Expert Group on Technology Transfer, a body established under the Convention, for enhancing implementation of a framework for meaningful and effective actions to enhance the implementation of article 4, paragraph 5, of the Convention. As part of the Marrakech Accords, the framework contained a set of activities in five key subject areas; technology needs assessments, technology information, enabling

environments, capacity-building, and mechanisms for technology transfer. The recommendations of the Expert Group on Technology Transfer would provide inputs towards the review of the Expert Group by the Conference of the Parties at its twelfth session, in 2006, including possible revision of key themes in the existing framework.

11. The Least Developed Countries Expert Group, which was established in the Marrakech Accords in 2001[3] to provide advice to the least developed countries on the preparation and implementation strategy of national adaptation programmes of action, was given a new mandate by the Conference to consider and subsequently report on the role of the Least Developed Countries Expert Group in support of the implementation of national adaptation programmes of action and also to provide information on the potential technical and financial difficulties that least developed country parties may have in implementing them.

12. The Conference encouraged parties to strengthen climate observations and to address the priorities identified in the Implementation Plan for the Global Observing System for Climate in support of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change prepared by the Global Climate Observing System and welcomed the emphasis given to enhancing the participation of developing countries in this effort.

13. The Conference reaffirmed that the five-year New Delhi work programme on article 6 of the Convention, which had been adopted at its eighth session, should continue to guide parties in implementing climate change education and outreach activities.

14. The high-level political debate during the Conference took place through four round-table discussions among ministers and other heads of delegation. Panel discussions, which were attended by 85 ministers, along with heads of delegation, focused on:

(a) "The Convention after 10 years: accomplishments and future challenges". Participants reflected on what they had achieved and not achieved, unanimously concluding that much more needed to be done if the objective of the Convention was to be attained. In that regard there was a call on parties to move forward on both adaptation and mitigation; the undeniable importance of both of which in addressing climate change and its effects was noted. Parties also noted the importance of scientific findings in supporting the process and the need for continued work in this area to further identify the degree and severity of climate change, and reduce existing uncertainties.

(b) "Impacts of climate change, adaptation measures and sustainable development". Speakers emphasized that it was important to enhance efforts to mainstream adaptation to climate change into the broader sustainable development agenda to achieve the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, as well as to benefit from synergy with other Rio conventions. It was noted that the scientific picture of climate change and its associated impacts at the regional and local levels was far from complete, and many countries agreed to address the information gaps and uncertainties. Speakers also stressed that the sufficient and timely availability of financial resources and relevant methodologies and technologies, including capacity-building, was of critical importance in that regard.

(c) "Technology and climate change". It was noted that relevant technologies were already available, for example in the area of energy efficiency and renewables; the challenge was to make those technologies available to all countries. It was also noted that innovative technologies, such as hydrogen-based technologies and capture and storage of carbon dioxide, had considerable potential to contribute to combating climate change. It was recognized that promotion of collaborative research and development projects and joint ventures between developed and developing countries would contribute to the dissemination of environmentally sustainable technologies. The participation of the private sector by means of an intelligent combination of regulation and incentives could be an important factor for the success of that effort, and it should be encouraged and supported by Governments. The importance of innovation and the search for market solutions was also stressed. An ideal cooperation model under the Convention should consist of building partnerships that brought together the skills, experiences and potentialities in developed and developing countries in a balanced and complementary manner. Capacity-building, institutional development and access to information were mentioned as key components of successful technology transfer initiatives, together with the creation of appropriate financing and development mechanisms.

(d) "Mitigation of climate change: policies and their impacts". There was a call for all countries to adopt novel approaches to mitigate climate change and to integrate climate change mitigation into the planning and decision-making process, while increasing economic efficiency, particularly in the energy and transport sectors. Those approaches could slow emission growth and decouple it from economic growth. They could achieve multiple co-benefits, such as energy security, improved local air quality, employment and reduced energy cost, and help to turn mitigation into a driver for economic growth, given the encouraging example of countries with economies in transition. It was noted that new and innovative mitigation policies and policy approaches were emerging, such as emissions trading and green investment schemes; they could play a central role in climate strategies and in enhancing the cost-effectiveness of those strategies. Those policies were becoming an integral part of a broader policy mix to control emissions from national economies. They were already helping a number of countries to become leaders in the emerging market of green technologies, to stimulate innovation and enhance competitiveness. Engaging the private sector, major stakeholders, all levels of government and citizens in the implementation of those strategies would ensure their continuity and ultimate success. Those strategies were seen by many parties as a key component for the development of comprehensive long-term strategies to achieve deeper cuts in emissions worldwide.

15. The Conference also agreed to organize a seminar to promote an informal exchange of information on actions relating to mitigation and adaptation to assist parties to continue to develop effective and appropriate responses to climate change, and policies and measures adopted by their respective Governments that support implementation of their existing commitments under the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol. This seminar was held in Bonn on 16 and 17 May 2005.

16. In addition to adopting formal decisions, the Conference has evolved into a global forum for businesses, environmental groups and others to exchange ideas, make contacts and present new reports and findings. Some 60 exhibits and more than 150 seminars and events were held on the sidelines of the intergovernmental talks.

17. The ongoing work of the liaison group of secretariats and officers of the relevant subsidiary bodies of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, and the Convention on Biological Diversity to promote complementarities among the three secretariats, has been continuing.

C. Conclusions and recommendations

18. The General Assembly may wish to, inter alia:

(a) Take note of the report of the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, as transmitted by the Secretary-General;

(b) Note the outcome of the tenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, hosted by the Government of Argentina from 6 to 17 December 2004;

(c) Invite the Executive Secretary to continue to report to it on the work of the Conference.

Notes

[1] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1771, No. 30822.

[2] FCCC/CP/1997/7/Add.1, decision 1/CP.3, annex.

[3] See FCCC/CP/2001/13/Add.1.

II. Report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa

A. Introduction

1. In its resolution 59/235 of 22 December 2004, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its sixtieth session on the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.[1] The present report has been submitted in response to that request.

2. In the same resolution, the Assembly stressed the importance of the Convention for meeting the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, and invited all Governments to take further measures to strengthen its implementation.

3. The General Assembly also invited the Global Environment Facility to strengthen the focal area of land degradation, primarily desertification and deforestation. It invited the secretariat of the Global Environment Facility and the secretariat of the Convention to finalize the draft memorandum of understanding in an expeditious way and to submit it for the consideration of and adoption by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention and the Council of the Global Environment Facility.

4. The third session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention was convened in Bonn, Germany from 2 to 11 May 2005. A number of important recommendations on the implementation of the Convention were adopted by the Committee, as possible decisions for the Conference of the Parties at its seventh session.

B. Implementation of General Assembly resolution 59/235

1. Contribution to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration

5. The implementation of resolution 59/235 took place in the context of the preparations for the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly to review progress made in the fulfilment of the commitments contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration. The Assembly, in its resolution 59/235, invited the Secretary-General to give due consideration to the role and place of the Convention in ongoing work in the context of the preparations for the high-level plenary meeting, including the report of the United Nations Millennium Project. In this regard, it is expected that the high-level plenary meeting will call for strengthening of the implementation of the Convention, thus contributing to reaching the Millennium Development Goals, in particular as they relate to poverty and hunger.

6. In fact, the Convention constitutes an overarching framework for the international community's efforts to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration. By, in particular, combining responses to the sustainable livelihood needs of lower-income groups

and ecosystem protection, rehabilitation and restoration in drylands, implementation of the national action programmes on combating desertification/land degradation contributes to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and the goals of the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development.[2]

2. Review of the implementation of the Convention and of its institutional arrangements, pursuant to article 22, paragraph 2 (a) and (b), and article 26 of the Convention: report on the third session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention

7. The Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention as a standing subsidiary body was established by the Conference of the Parties at its fifth session to assist it in its function of regularly reviewing the implementation of the Convention.

8. The third session of the Committee was convened in Bonn, Germany, from 2 to 11 May 2005. The meeting considered reports on the implementation of the Convention submitted by affected African parties, as well as relevant subregional and regional reports. It also considered the reports by developed country parties on measures taken to assist in the preparation and implementation of the action programmes of affected African parties, including information on financial resources they have provided, or are providing, under the Convention, as well as information provided by relevant organs, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, and by other intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations on their activities in support of the preparation and implementation of action programmes under the Convention.

9. The Committee reviewed available information regarding: the mobilization and use of financial resources and other support by multilateral agencies and institutions; necessary adjustments to the elaboration process and implementation of action programmes, including review of the enhanced implementation of the obligations under the Convention; ways and means of promoting know-how and technology transfer, as well as of promoting experience sharing and information exchange among parties and interested institutions and organizations; ways and means of improving procedures for the communication of information, as well as the quality and format of reports to be submitted to the Conference of the Parties.

10. Two global interactive dialogues were convened: on the mainstreaming of national action programmes and their contribution to overall poverty eradication; and on land degradation/desertification and their impact on migration and conflicts.

11. The Committee discussed specific thematic issues pertaining to the implementation process in Africa, namely: participatory processes involving civil society and non-governmental and community-based organizations; legislative and institutional frameworks or arrangements; resource mobilization and coordination, both domestic and international, including the conclusion of partnership agreements; linkages and synergies with other environmental conventions and, as appropriate, with national development strategies; measures for the rehabilitation of degraded land and for early warning systems for mitigating the effects of drought; drought and desertification monitoring and assessment; access by affected country parties, particularly affected developing country parties, to appropriate technology, knowledge and know-how.

12. A number of recommendations were made on major thematic issues such as: the participatory processes; legislative and institutional frameworks; the promotion of synergies; resource mobilization, including coordination and partnership agreements; rehabilitation of degraded lands; monitoring and assessment, including the improvement of the reporting process; awareness-raising, information and communication.

13. Other important decisions taken by the Committee included the consideration of thematic issues under a global review on measures taken to assist in the preparation and implementation of the action programmes of affected country parties.

14. The Committee recommended the need for a review process and procedure for communication of information, as well as of the quality and format of reports, mainstreaming of national action programmes into national development frameworks, including poverty reduction strategy papers, for efficiency and effectiveness of measures in reaching the end-users of natural resources. The Committee also called for increased political commitment and awareness-raising, in particular in regard to the International Year of Deserts and Desertification, 2006. It called on the General Assembly at its September 2005 high-level plenary meeting to underline the global magnitude of the issue of sustainable land management and combating desertification.

15. The session gave the opportunity to parties to participate in a number of interesting debates, triggered by high-quality presentations and experts' discussion. Progress was achieved in many fields that are of crucial importance to the future implementation of the Convention, including those of monitoring and assessment, local-level capacity-building and mainstreaming and partnership-building for the implementation of national action programmes. Many parties expressed their appreciation for the opportunity provided by the Committee session to review implementation and pursue at the same time a needed policy dialogue on related thematic and substantive issues.

16. At its seventh session, the Conference of the Parties will review the terms of reference of the Committee, its operations and its schedule of meetings, with a view to making any necessary modification, including reconsidering the need for and modalities of the Committee as a subsidiary body. This review will be based on considerations such as relevance, impact, effectiveness, appropriateness of format and cost-effectiveness. The seventh session of the Conference of the Parties is scheduled to take place in Nairobi from 17 to 28 October 2005.

17. The Committee also made recommendations on financing of the Convention implementation by multilateral agencies and institutions, including the Global Environment Facility.

3. Collaboration with the Global Environment Facility

18. At its fifty-ninth session, the General Assembly emphasized the need for the provision of adequate resources for the focal area of land degradation, primarily desertification and deforestation, of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and in this respect invited the Facility to strengthen the focal area of land degradation.

19. The Assembly also invited the secretariat of GEF and the secretariat of the Convention to finalize the draft memorandum of understanding in an expeditious

way and to submit it for the consideration of and adoption by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention and the Council of GEF.

20. With regard to strengthening the focal area of land degradation, the Assembly may recall that further to the opening by GEF at its second Assembly of a new GEF focal area of land degradation, the Council of GEF approved in May 2003 a new operational programme on sustainable land management as a means of enhancing its support to the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.

21. Member States may also recall that the GEF operational programme on sustainable land management (operational programme 15) is meant to provide a framework for the development of activities eligible for GEF incremental financing to address the root causes and negative impacts of land degradation on ecosystem stability, functions and services, as well as on people's livelihoods and economic well-being, through sustainable land management practices.

22. The secretariat has pursued its collaboration with GEF and its implementing and executing agencies on the implementation of operational programme 15. Initiatives, partnerships and projects are being developed or implemented by the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) or GEF itself. The focal area of land degradation continues to receive a great deal of attention from the members of the GEF Council, including in the context of ongoing consultations on the fourth replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund (GEF-4).

23. With regard to financial resources allocated to the focal area of land degradation, the GEF secretariat brought to the attention of the Council the fact that the response from countries in developing project proposals had been overwhelming, with the envelope for GEF-3 being oversubscribed at a very early stage. This demonstrated that the allocation of US$ 250 million was not commensurate with the requirements of the parties to cover the needs of the focal area in the GEF-3 cycle.

24. This situation will have to be taken into account in the course of ongoing consultations on GEF-4. At the last replenishment meeting, some Council members noted that resources available for the land degradation focal area were not sufficient to meet the demands of countries, and called for increased resources for the focal area in GEF-4.

25. With respect to working arrangements between the Convention secretariat and GEF, consultations have continued between the respective secretariats on the preparation of the draft memorandum of understanding called for by the Conference of the Parties. The document was introduced to the Council of GEF at its June 2005 session. The Council recognized the balance between the various interests that had been achieved in the draft memorandum of understanding.

26. Despite some differences of opinion concerning the title of the document on the part of some members, a decision on this matter was adopted by the Council. The Chief Executive Officer and Chairman of GEF was requested to transmit the draft memorandum of understanding to the Executive Secretary of the secretariat for submission to the Conference of the Parties at its seventh session with a view to its consideration and adoption in order to support collaboration, and implementation of

the Convention. The Council requested that, once approved by the Conference of the Parties, the memorandum of understanding should be submitted to it for approval.

4. Synergies with other relevant conventions and organizations

27. By decision 12/COP.6,[3] the Conference of the Parties reviewed activities for the promotion and strengthening of relationships with other relevant conventions and relevant international organizations, institutions and agencies. In this regard, the work of the liaison group of secretariats and officers of the relevant subsidiary bodies of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa and the Convention on Biological Diversity to promote complementarities among the three secretariats has been continuing.

28. The secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification has continued to liaise with other relevant agencies and institutions. With the United Nations Forum on Forests and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, the secretariat focused its action on low forest cover countries, with a view to having this special category benefit from the current or any other international arrangement on forests.

29. In the same vein, UNCCD has concluded a memorandum of understanding with UNDP as a strategic framework of cooperation aimed at achieving results and maximizing impacts in order to contribute to the progress of implementation of the Convention at the national level. The memorandum of understanding was signed on 20 October 2004.

C. Action requested of the General Assembly

30. The sixtieth session of the General Assembly is taking place at a time when the international community is assessing progress made in the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. Consistent with the outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, decisions taken by the Conference of the Parties at its sixth session[2] and General Assembly resolution 59/235, stating that the Convention constitutes a major international instrument which can contribute to poverty eradication and help to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, at its sixtieth session the Assembly may wish to recommit the international community to allocating more financial resources to rural development, in particular for the rehabilitation of degraded land where pockets of poverty are widespread.

31. The third session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention extensively discussed the mobilization and use of financial resources and other support by multilateral agencies and institutions. The Assembly may wish to reiterate its invitation to United Nations funds and programmes, the Bretton Woods institutions, donor countries and other development agencies to increase their assistance to affected countries by making more resources available to them. It may also call for a robust fourth replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund in order to increase substantially the level of resources allocated to the implementation of the Convention, in the light of the demonstrated need.

32. A number of parties have yet to pay their mandatory contributions to the core budget of the Convention. As it did last year, the General Assembly may wish to reiterate its appeal to the parties to pay those contributions to the core budget, which are due to be paid promptly every 1 January.

33. Further, in its resolution 56/196 of 21 December 2001, the General Assembly approved the continuation of the current institutional linkage and related administrative arrangements between the United Nations Secretariat and the secretariat of the Convention for a further five-year period, to be reviewed by the General Assembly and the Conference of the Parties not later than 31 December 2006. Since the institutional linkage has proved effective, the Assembly may wish to decide, with the concurrence of the Conference of the Parties, to extend it for another period of five years.

34. Likewise, in accordance with that institutional arrangement and in conformity with past practice, the General Assembly may also wish to take action to ensure that provision is made in the calendar of conferences and meetings for the biennium 2006-2007 for the sessions of the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies that will take place during that period.

Notes

[1] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1954, No. 33480.

[2] *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August-4 September 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 2, annex.

[3] See ICCD/COP(6)11/Add.1.

III. Report of the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity

A. Introduction

1. In paragraph 12 of its resolution 59/236 of 22 December 2004, the General Assembly invited the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity to continue reporting to it on the ongoing work regarding the Convention, including its Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

2. Since the previous report of the Executive Secretary to the General Assembly (A/59/197, sect. III) several significant meetings have been held within the framework of the Convention and its Biosafety Protocol. These include the tenth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA), held in Bangkok from 7 to 11 February 2005; the second meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol, held in Montreal from 30 May to 3 June 2005; the first meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Protected Areas, held in Montecatini, Italy, from 13 to 17 June 2005; the third meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Access and Benefit-sharing, held in Bangkok from 14 to 18 February 2005; and the first meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Liability and Redress under the Biosafety Protocol, held in Montreal from 25 to 27 May 2005.

3. The reports of these meetings, together with lists of participants and pre-session documentation have been made available to all Governments and are available at the website of the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (http://www.biodiv.org). Section B below provides an overview of the outcomes of these meetings, focusing on progress in the implementation of the decisions taken at the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties and on the continuing effort to ensure the effective implementation of the Biosafety Protocol. Section C provides information on cooperation and on other activities and processes under the Convention of relevance to the work of the General Assembly. Section D provides recommendations for the consideration of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session.

4. As of 13 July 2005, there were 188 parties to the Convention and 124 parties to the Cartagena Protocol.

B. Overview of the outcomes of meetings held since the submission of the previous report

1. Outcome of the tenth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice[1]

5. In accordance with the mandate provided by decision VII/31 of the Conference of the Parties at its seventh meeting, of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) developed a draft programme of work on island biodiversity, taking into account the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States; the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action; the Plan of

Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development; and the Millennium Development Goals, in particular goal 7.[2] The overall purpose of the programme of work on island biodiversity is the significant reduction of island biodiversity loss by 2010 and beyond, at the global, regional and national levels, through the implementation of the three main objectives of the Convention, for the benefit of all forms of life on islands and, in particular, as a contribution to poverty alleviation and the sustainable development of small island developing States. The draft programme of work contains goals, global targets and time frames and island-specific priority actions. SBSTTA recommends its adoption by the Conference of the Parties at its eighth meeting, to be held in March 2006.

6. Further to decision VII/6 of the Conference of the Parties, SBSTTA reviewed the draft findings of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, including the synthesis report on biodiversity, thereby providing an opportunity to delegations to provide comments for the consideration of the Panel and Board of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment in its finalization of the report.[3] At its eleventh meeting, scheduled to take place in November 2005, SBSTTA will consider the final products of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, including the synthesis report on biodiversity, with a view to making recommendations for the consideration of the Conference of the Parties at its eighth meeting concerning the implications of the findings of the Assessment for the future work of the Convention (see sect. III A below).

7. Further, SBSTTA developed a set of global outcome-oriented targets for the implementation of the programmes of work on the biological diversity of inland water ecosystems and marine and coastal biodiversity; indicators for assessing progress towards, and communicating, the 2010 biodiversity target at the global level; and an outline for the second Global Biodiversity Outlook (see sect. III B below).

2. The outcome of the second meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety[4]

8. The second meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety was attended by more than 600 delegates, representing 101 parties to the Protocol and 16 non-party States, as well as a total of 139 organizations, including United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, and academic and industry groups. Building on the outcome of the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol, the meeting further developed the tools necessary for the effective implementation of the Protocol. It considered issues relating to the handling, transport, packaging and identification of living modified organisms, including documentation of living modified organisms intended for food, feed or processing; options for implementing notification requirements; risk assessment and risk management; socio-economic considerations; public awareness and participation; and liability and redress. It also addressed a number of standing issues: the report of the Compliance Committee, including its rules of procedure; operations and activities of the Biosafety Clearing-House; the status of capacity-building activities and use of the roster of experts, financial mechanisms and resources, and cooperation with other organizations.

9. Although the parties failed to reach consensus regarding documentation requirements for living modified organisms intended for direct use as food, or feed, or for processing as envisaged in article 18, paragraph 2 (a), of the Protocol, they further reinforced the documentation requirements adopted at their first meeting in decision BS-I/6 B relating to living modified organisms destined for contained use (article 18, paragraph 2 (b)) and for intentional introduction into the environment (article 18, paragraph 2 (c)).[5] In this respect, parties and other Governments were urged to comply fully with these requirements and to provide information to the Biosafety Clearing-House on domestic requirements regarding imports in general and documentation requirements in particular. It was decided that documentation requirements of article 18, paragraphs 2 (b) and (c), would be considered at the third meeting, in 2006, in the context of the review of implementation of the Protocol as provided for under its article 35, without prejudice to future consideration of a stand-alone document.

10. With regard to risk assessment and risk management, parties were encouraged to include in their interim reports information on experiences and progress in implementing risk assessment and risk management approaches. It was also decided to establish an ad hoc technical expert group on risk assessment to consider the nature and scope of existing risk assessment approaches; evaluate their relevance under the Protocol and identify gaps; and identify areas where capacity-building activities might be particularly important.[6]

11. Capacity-building in biosafety remains an important preoccupation for parties. In this regard, parties were reminded to submit to the Biosafety Clearing-House information on their capacity-building needs and priorities, and developed countries and relevant international organizations were invited to provide support for developing country parties, as well as for parties with economies in transition, in the field of capacity-building, in particular for the development and implementation of national biosafety frameworks.[7] The meeting underlined the imperative of prioritization of capacity-building needs; the development of national strategies for capacity-building in biosafety; the sustainability of capacity-building; and the promotion of regional and subregional initiatives and approaches to address common needs and priorities. Further, it adopted a process for the review and, if necessary, revision of the Action Plan for Building Capacities for the Effective Implementation of the Protocol adopted at the first meeting.

12. The parties to the Protocol also adopted decisions on international cooperation, exchange of information and public awareness and participation.[8] They requested the Executive Secretary to pursue efforts to obtain observer status for the secretariat with the World Trade Organization's committees on sanitary and phytosanitary measures and on technical barriers to trade; to reinforce cooperation with the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the Office International des Epizooties and the International Plant Protection Convention; and to establish cooperation with the World Customs Organization, the International Organization for Standardization, the Sub-Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods, the International Air Transport Association and other relevant customs and transport organizations where biosafety issues are considered. As part of efforts to implement article 23 of the Protocol, on public awareness and participation, the meeting encouraged parties to the Protocol and other States to seek and leverage opportunities for cooperation with other parties, other States and relevant international bodies at subregional, regional and international levels. It urged parties and other States to develop and

implement national programmes of public awareness, education and participation, including public access to information, concerning the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms. The meeting encouraged use of the media and other specified Convention on Biological Diversity tools and programmes and United Nations initiatives. The parties also decided to consider and review progress on the implementation of article 23 at their fifth meeting.

13. In addition, the meeting invited parties, other Governments and relevant international organizations to: submit views on rights and obligations of transit States; exchange information on biosafety research; and submit views on establishing a permanent subsidiary body to provide scientific and technical advice.[9] It called on parties, other Governments and relevant international organizations to provide more emphasis to research on socio-economic impacts of living modified organisms and to share information on research methods and results regarding such socio-economic impacts. Parties, other Governments and relevant international organizations are required to provide their views and case studies concerning socio-economic impacts of living modified organisms in time for the fourth meeting of the parties.

14. Finally, the parties to the Protocol approved the rules of procedure of the Compliance Committee established at their first meeting, in February 2004, pursuant to article 34 of the Protocol.[10] The mandate of the Committee is to promote compliance with the provisions of the Protocol and to address cases of non-compliance.

3. The outcome of the first meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Protected Areas

15. The Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Protected Areas, which was established by the Conference of the Parties in its decision VII/28, met for the first time from 13 to 17 June in Montecatini, Italy. The main outcomes of this meeting included (i) the initiation of work to compile and synthesize existing ecological criteria for future identification of potential sites for protection in marine areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction, as well as applicable biogeographical classification systems, and recommendations concerning cooperation and coordination among various forums for the establishment of marine protected areas; (ii) agreement on options for mobilizing financial resources for the implementation of the programme of work through a variety of funding mechanisms; (iii) requests for updating and making available the existing list of toolkits for implementing the programme of work on protected areas, and for developing further tools specific to national and regional conditions, including future capacity-building in the use of toolkits; and (iv) recommendations on the process, guidelines and mechanisms for monitoring progress in the implementation of programme of work on protected areas, as well as a schedule for this work.

16. The Working Group will continue its work to identify options for cooperation for the establishment of marine protected areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction at its second meeting in December 2005. The Working Group requested the Executive Secretary to transmit to the Ad Hoc Open-ended Informal Working Group established by paragraph 73 of General Assembly resolution 59/24 the outcomes of its work, for information.

4. Third meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Access to Genetic Resources and Benefit-sharing

17. Pursuant to paragraph 44 (o) of the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, subsequently reaffirmed by the General Assembly in its resolutions 57/260 of 20 December 2002 and 58/212 of 23 December 2003, the Conference of the Parties at its seventh meeting, in February 2004, mandated the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Access and Benefit-sharing to negotiate an international regime on access to genetic resources and benefit-sharing. The third meeting of the Working Group was held in Bangkok from 14 to 18 February 2005.[11] The meeting undertook an initial review of the process, scope, nature, potential objectives and elements of an international regime on access to genetic resources and benefit-sharing. It developed options on the scope, potential objectives and elements of the international regime and invited parties, Governments, indigenous and local communities, relevant international organizations and all relevant stakeholders to submit written comments and proposals thereon for consideration at its fourth meeting. The meeting also established a process for the identification of gaps within the existing international legal framework. The fourth meeting of the Working Group is scheduled to take place in February 2006 in Spain to continue with the negotiation process.

5. The first meeting of the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group of Legal and Technical Experts on Liability and Redress under the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety

18. At its first meeting, in February 2004, the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol established, by its decision BS-I/8, an Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group of Legal and Technical Experts on Liability and Redress under the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to carry out the process provided for under article 27 of the Protocol. The first meeting of the Working Group was held in Montreal, Canada, from 25 to 27 May 2005.[12] The Working Group reviewed information relating to liability and redress for damage resulting from transboundary movements of living modified organisms and developed options regarding the potential content of a liability and redress regime under the Protocol, including the option of no liability and redress instrument. Parties, Governments, relevant international organizations and stakeholders were invited to submit further views with respect to approaches, options and issues identified by the meeting for further consideration by the Working Group at its next meeting. At its second meeting serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol, the Conference of the Parties took note of the report of the Working Group and called upon parties, other Governments and other stakeholders to provide financial resources for the organization of the second meeting of the Working Group before the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol, scheduled to take place in Brazil in March 2006.[13]

C. Other activities and processes of relevance to the General Assembly

1. Findings of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment relevant to the 2010 biodiversity target and the Millennium Development Goals

19. The main findings of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment on biodiversity can be summarized as follows:

(a) Biodiversity is being lost at rates unprecedented in human history;

(b) Losses of biodiversity and decline of ecosystem services are of concern for human well-being, especially for the poorest;

(c) The costs borne by society due to biodiversity loss are often greater than the benefits gained through ecosystem change;

(d) The drivers of change are steady or, more often, increasing in magnitude;

(e) Many successful response options have been used, but further progress in addressing biodiversity loss will require actions to address the main drivers of biodiversity loss; and

(f) Unprecedented additional efforts would be required to achieve, by 2010, a significant reduction in the rate of biodiversity loss at all levels.

20. The Assessment underlines the importance of the linkages between the 2010 biodiversity target and the Millennium Development Goals. It finds that the degradation of ecosystem services could significantly increase during the first half of this century, posing a barrier to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. At the same time, many of the actions needed to promote economic development and reduce hunger and poverty are likely to have a negative impact on biodiversity. Coordinated implementation of the goals and targets of both processes would facilitate the consideration of the trade-offs and synergies.

21. The Conference of the Parties will consider the implications of the Assessment for the Convention's work at its eighth meeting, in March 2006.

2. The Global Biodiversity Outlook

22. At its seventh meeting, the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary, with the assistance of the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre and other relevant international organizations, to prepare the second Global Biodiversity Outlook for publication prior to the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, in March 2006.[14]

23. In response to this decision, the secretariat initiated start-up activities to produce the second Global Biodiversity Outlook, including the preparation of a draft outline of the report. The report was structured specifically to serve as the primary mechanism for communicating a comprehensive assessment of progress towards the achievement of the 2010 target at the global level, as well as communicating trends in biodiversity related to the three objectives of the Convention. The content of the report will be based on the seven focal areas and their respective indicators approved by the Conference of the Parties at its seventh meeting, and also on additional indicators identified and approved by SBSTTA at its tenth meeting for further development and testing and eventual incorporation in the report. In

addition, the report will draw on information contained in the national reports, as well as information provided by relevant international organizations, programmes and other global assessments. The report will also address the issue of assessing the future outlook for the Convention and prospects for 2010 and beyond in the context of the Strategic Plan. It will also provide an analytical narrative of efforts required to overcome obstacles and challenges in assessing progress towards the 2010 target.

3. Cooperation with other conventions and international organizations and initiatives

24. The Executive Secretary has continued efforts to strengthen cooperation with other conventions, international organizations and initiatives. In line with decision VII/26 of the Conference of the Parties, a liaison group comprising the heads of the secretariats of the five biodiversity-related conventions (the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna or Flora (CITES), the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar, Iran, 1971), and the World Heritage Convention) has been established to further cooperation among these instruments and thereby to promote the achievement of the 2010 target. Further options for a global partnership for biodiversity are to be discussed at the meeting of the Working Group on Review of Implementation in September 2005. A flexible global partnership for biodiversity will provide a framework between all relevant actors to enhance implementation of the Convention and progress towards the 2010 target through improved coherence and synergy.

25. The work of the joint liaison group of the secretariats and officers of the relevant subsidiary bodies of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the Convention on Biological Diversity to promote complementarities among the three secretariats is continuing.

26. The Executive Secretary also undertook other collaborative activities with relevant conventions and international organizations. For example:

(a) The Executive Secretary co-organized the International Conference on "Biodiversity: Science and Governance", which took place from 24 to 28 January 2005 at the headquarters of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in Paris. The Conference produced two documents: the Paris Declaration on Biodiversity, an appeal by scientists on biodiversity; and a Conference Statement, which recalls Governments' commitments to the 2010 biodiversity target and supports the launch of an international multi-stakeholder consultative process to assess scientific information and policy options for decision-making;

(b) As part of the celebrations for the International Day for Biological Diversity for 2005, the secretariat, in collaboration with the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment secretariat, launched the Biodiversity Synthesis Report of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, on 19 May 2005 in Montreal, Canada. The secretariat held a joint seminar with McGill University and the secretariat of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment aimed at providing an in-depth discussion of the report and its relationship to science and policy. The report is one of many associated reports generated by the five-year Millennium Ecosystem Assessment programme, initiated by the United Nations Secretary-General specifically to carry

out a comprehensive study of the relationship between ecosystems and human well-being. The findings of the biodiversity synthesis report underline the importance of biological diversity in providing concrete services upon which human life depends, including important security and provisioning functions. The theme of the International Day for Biological Diversity for 2005, "Biodiversity: life insurance for our changing world", was therefore particularly relevant in view of the outcomes and key issues which emerged from the launch of the Biodiversity Synthesis Report.

D. Conclusions and recommendations

27. The General Assembly may, at its sixtieth session, wish to, inter alia:

(a) *Take note* of the report of the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, as submitted by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its sixtieth session;

(b) *Note* the outcome of the second meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the continuing effort to ensure the effective implementation of the Protocol;

(c) *Also note* the outcome of the tenth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice;

(d) *Further note* the outcome of the work of the first meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Protected Areas and its recommendations concerning the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity in marine areas beyond national jurisdiction, including marine protected areas beyond national jurisdiction;

(e) *Welcome* the progress made by the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Access to Genetic Resources and Benefit-sharing regarding the negotiation of an international regime on access and benefit-sharing;

(f) *Also welcome* the establishment of the Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions comprising the secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention on Migratory Species, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and the World Heritage Convention and *encourage* further cooperation in order to promote complementarities and build synergies among these conventions, while respecting their independent legal status;

(g) *Urge* parties to the Convention that have not yet ratified or acceded to the Protocol to do so as soon as possible;

(h) *Note* the interdependence of the 2010 biodiversity target and the Millennium Development Goals, and the relevance of the biodiversity indicators developed under the Convention for target 9 (to "reverse the loss of environmental resources") of Millennium Development Goal 7 (to "ensure environmental sustainability");

(i) *Welcome* the report of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment and *take note* of the important linkages between biodiversity, ecosystem functioning and human well-being;

(j) *Invite* the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity to continue reporting to the General Assembly on the ongoing work regarding the Convention and its Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

Notes

[1] The report of the meeting has been circulated under the symbol UNEP/CBD/COP/8/2.

[2] SBSTTA recommendation X/1, annex.

[3] See SBSTTA recommendation X/3.

[4] The report of the meeting has been circulated under the symbol UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/2/15.

[5] See decision BS-II/10.

[6] See decision BS-II/9, annex.

[7] See decision BS-II/3.

[8] See decisions BS-II/6, BS-II/2 and BS-II/13.

[9] Decision BS-II/14.

[10] Decision BS-II/1.

[11] The report of the meeting has been circulated under the symbol UNEP/CBD/WG-ABS/3/7.

[12] See UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/2/11.

[13] See decision BS-II/11.

[14] Decision VII/30, para. 8 (a).